Combining the use of a simulation game with online support via Black Board

The case of a strategic management module

By Dr Hülya Öztel
Context

• CORP 3501
  – New module / Curriculum 2004
  – Delivered in Leicester, Bedford (BED), Hong Kong (HK) and Copenhagen (NB)
  – Overall intake about 450 students across sites

• Risks and challenges of using a simulation at all
  – Engaging colleagues: steep learning curve for everyone
  – Operational challenges: copyright clearance; software compatibility
  – Technical or general implementation problems:
    Repercussions potentially affecting over 450 students, 4 delivery sites, credibility with partners, colleagues and management
Context (continued)

• So WHY?
  – Madness (reason number 1)…
  – Colleagues’ early engagement and enthusiasm
    Involvement of all in curriculum design from the outset
    thanks to:
      • TF award: allowed setting up a module development
        workshop with all British and Danish colleagues
      • Administrative role: Chaired Programme Board in Hong Kong
        (allowed to meet up o/seas colleagues re. module
        development matters too)
Practical aspects of the Airline Business Simulation Game

• Students
  – Airline directors
  – Compete against peers
  – Use strategic management principles
  – Make operational decisions affecting, ticket pricing, destinations, aircraft purchase or lease, maintenance, personnel management, financial management etc..

• Schedule:
  – A week in real time simulates a financial quarter
  – Weekly return of a decision set
  – Weekly feedback on outcomes of decisions

• Class size implications
  – 10 industries within which 8 to 10 companies compete against each other
  – Tutors allocated the management of particular industries, depending on timetabled tutorial groups.
Why a combined use of BB and A business simulation game

- Benefits sought from BB:
  - Existing website
  - Interactivity
  - Accurate communication

- Benefits sought from using a simulation game
  - Applied, experiential learning
  - Collaborative / androgogic learning

  Androgogic teaching and learning models recognise that learners (especially adults) are highly self-directed and motivated. Androgogic learning is problem and task-centred. It values learning from peers and focuses on the learning process as much as knowledge content.

Screen shots from Airline
This illustrates the type of screen provided by the game. These allow students to enter their decisions.
A new file is saved to a floppy disk/Zip or USB storage device when students complete their decision entry and select 'Finished – Return to Menu'. In this case the file is named "TEAM1.R1".

This is the decision file for Team 1 in industry R and in quarter 1. This is the file students submit to their instructor.
Tuesday, May 10, 2005 -- Portfolio Collection from the Student Advice Centre
Please note that those who can not collect their portfolios on Wednesday the 11th will be able to pick them up from the student advice centre, Thursday onwards, during its normal opening hours.

Kind regards, Hulya.

Friday, May 06, 2005 -- Simulation: Award Winning Team
I am pleased to announce that the award winning airline is SKYRON, managed by
- BASI, Kamaljit
- BHOGAITA, Priya
- CRASSMANN, Marco
- MEHMO, Amardeep
The £500 prize money will be split equally between team members and will be presented during the graduation ceremony.

Very best wishes, Hulya.

Friday, May 06, 2005 -- Portfolio feedback
How and when to collect your portfolios
Peter, David and myself will be handing back the portfolios on Wednesday the 11th of May between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. from BH126.
Click on ‘Simulation game’. A list of industries with the tutor and the number of companies competing will show. Select your industry.
Group Page: Industry H - Team 7

- **Group Discussion Board**
  Use the Group Discussion Board for debates and conversations.

- **Send Email**
  Send email to one or more group members.

- **Group Members**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kamaljit BASI</td>
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<td>Priya BHOGAITA</td>
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<td>Marco GRASSMANN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amardeep MEHMI</td>
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Students post their decision files in their private discussion board. I process these and provide them their company report for that quarter online.
Outcomes

• Students
  – Overwhelmingly positive feedback, even reluctant students engaged (evident from reflective work and tutorial presentations)
  – Amazing online engagement (mostly): jokes, exchange of prep materials, meeting arrangements etc..
  – Year 2 student reactions (unlike any other year): “What is this Airline thing you are doing with final year students???”

• Technical support colleagues
  – Excellent and v. valuable: Lab support, Web design and Web support
Outcomes

• Teaching team
  – Positive feedback, even from the early sceptic
  – Huge staffing problems:
    • Leicester: Ongoing illness (in total over 12 weeks missed over the year). The online presence of the material made it possible to cover for them effectively

• Me, as module leader:
  – Preparation and support well beyond the norm
  – Skill development
  – Clear sense of satisfaction, despite hurdles (student and colleague feedback)
• Nightmares:
  – Site 1: PT Lecturer left in the middle of the course for China
  – Site 2: Overconfident lecturer underestimated preparation needed.
  – Site 3: Tutor ‘appears’ last minute, I train them on the phone…

• Positives:
  – Skill development
  – Pedagogy: learning experience unparalleled for students and staff. Sense of fun, practical subject relevant skills, personal growth
Would I do it again?

– Yes (because I am still mad) but:
  
  • Need to secure excellent technical support
  • Try on a smaller cohort if at all possible (fewer things can go wrong)
  • Game selection: We selected Airline because of student ease of use (primary criteria), I knew ease of processing was important so took it into account, but I would actively seek and trial programmes/games which allow immediate and automatic online processing and result generation (downsides – lack of control and flexibility - to be tested)
Wining team: Best Airline Business Simulation Award and Certificate